

REMARKS

Initially, Applicants would like to express their appreciation to the Examiner for the detailed Official Action provided, for the indication that the drawings are acceptable, for acknowledgement of Applicants' priority claim and receipt of the certified copy of the priority document, and for acknowledgement of Applicants' Information Disclosure Statement and return of the initialed Form PTO-1449.

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the indication that claims 5-14 and 19-27 are allowable and that claims 2 and 16 contain allowable subject matter, on pages 5 and 6 of the Official Action.

Upon entry of the above amendments claims 1 and 15 will have been amended to respectively include the subject matter of claims 2 and 16, which the Examiner has indicated as being allowable. Claims 1, 3-15 and 17-27 are currently pending. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the outstanding objections and rejections, and allowance of all the claims pending in the present application.

On pages 2-5 of the Official Action, claims 1, 3, 4, 15, 17 and 18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being anticipated by TAKASUKA et al. (U.S. Patent Publication No. 2003/0202450) in view of SAKAMOTO (U.S. Patent Publication No. 2003/0058776).

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). In this regard, Applicant notes that claims 1 and 15 will have been amended to respectively include the subject matter of claims 2 and 16, which the Examiner has indicated as being allowable. Accordingly, Applicants submit that claims 1 and 15 are allowable for at least this reason, as are claims 3, 4, 17 and 18 which depend therefrom. Applicants further submits that claims 3, 4, 17 and 18 recite additional subject matter which further defines over the prior art of record.

Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) is improper at least for each and certainly for all of the above-noted reasons. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection, and an early indication of the allowance of all of the pending claims.

COMMENTS ON REASONS FOR ALLOWANCE

In regard to the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter in claims 2, 5-14, 16 and 19-27 on pages 5 and 6 of the Official Action, Applicants do not disagree with the Examiner's indication that the prior art fails to disclose or teach various features of these claims. However, Applicants wish to make clear that the claims in the present application recite a combination of features, and that the patentability of these claims is also based on the totality of the features recited therein, which define over the prior art. Thus the reasons for allowance should not be limited to those mentioned by the Examiner.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Entry and consideration of the present amendment, reconsideration of the outstanding Official Action, and allowance of the present application and all of the claims therein are respectfully requested and now believed to be appropriate.

Applicants have made a sincere effort to place the present application in condition for allowance and believe that they have now done so.

Any amendments to the claims that have been made in this amendment, which do not narrow the scope of the claims, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered cosmetic in nature, and to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should the Examiner have any questions, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully Submitted,
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